

Chairing a meeting

Introduction

This handout has been developed as an introduction to what chairing a meeting involves, what makes a good chair and some useful tips and advice to keep your meeting effective and efficient.

Everyone is busy and an effectively run meeting is an efficient way to get things done quickly, to support building a team and to enable collaboration to ensure the best outcomes are achieved.

Chairing a meeting is like any other skill, it involves some learning and then practise, practise, practise!

Attributes of a good chair

- Integrity / Personal strength
- Clear vision and passion for the work
- Emotional intelligence
- Intellect and experience
- Decisiveness
- Ability to delegate
- Impartial and objective
- Courage
- Ensure decisions are made and recorded with clear timeframes

You might be looking at this list and saying well that's not me, remember everyone has to start somewhere and the purpose of this handout is to provide some information about how you can become a good chair. Everyone has to start somewhere!

Dos and Don'ts

A good chairperson will:

A good chairperson will not:

Start and finish on time

Waste time

Make all members feel valued

Make all the decisions

Listen to others and allow everyone to contribute

Allow one or two people to dominate the meeting

Ensure decisions are reached

Allow points to move from agenda to agenda because they are not dealt with

Preparing for the meeting

1. Meet with purpose

Nothing is more frustrating than meeting for meetings sake, ask yourself what the purpose of the meeting is and make sure there is a reason for getting everyone together. Consider the nature of the meeting as this will have an impact on formality.

2. Organise Meeting Space

As the chair you are responsible for ensuring the meeting is held in a suitable space. Ensure the room is big enough for all the attendees, if people are attending virtually (telephone, video conferencing etc.) that the

technology is available and working (check sound levels). Arrive prior to the start of the meeting and ensure the room is set up as your group will require.

3. Cultural considerations

If this is a new group of people getting together, or a lot of members are unknown to each other and the meeting is going to be long and involved then consider opening with a karakia (prayer or incantation). You must use a karakia if your meeting involves the sharing of food. The chair doesn't need to be the one offering the karakia, but if you are not you must ensure you have spoken with the appropriate person to deliver the karakia prior to the meeting. A meeting opened with a karakia should be closed with one as well.

Introductions normally begin with the chair and it would be good to lean your mihi or pepeha, this does not need to be presented at every meeting but should be delivered at the first meeting and if new people join your meeting.

4. Develop and distribute the agenda

Have a clear agenda and identify ownership of the items, if an agenda item is that Mary has to feedback on data collected make sure it is clear that this is Mary's responsibility. If Mary wants to discuss the data that she has presented into a document, send the document with the agenda so that members can familiarise themselves with the data before the meeting. Make sure the agenda has time for other or general business. Ensure the agenda goes out at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.

5. Invited guests

If someone outside the normal membership has been invited make sure this information is on the agenda so that they can be welcomed. There is nothing worse than someone attending a meeting and the members question them on why they are there. And make sure they are invited to the relevant part of the meeting, if they do not need to be there for the whole meeting then do not make them sit through the entire meeting.

6. Identify roles before the meeting

You cannot effectively chair a meeting and scribe the notes, make sure the note taker is identified before the meeting.

The meeting

1. Start on time, if others are late then they can be acknowledged on arrival, but it is not fair to the members who are on time to wait for the others.
2. Make sure any new members or guests are introduced
3. Work through the agenda in order. If members digress and start wandering from the agenda then pull them back to the agenda. You can acknowledge that the point they raise is important and add it to general business to discuss later.
4. Always keep an eye on the time, and move items on if necessary, make sure you have a watch or can see a clock.
5. Ensure that an outcome is reached, if members are talking in circles then interrupt and summarise what they are saying and see if you can get an agreed resolution. If no resolution can be achieved then identify what other information is required to achieve a resolution and identify that as an agenda item for the next meeting

6. Stop private conversations as soon as they happen
7. Ensure everyone has a chance to share their views, don't assume silence means agreement. This is one of the most difficult aspects of chairing as it involves both restraining those who talk too much and encouraging those who are nervous or new.
8. Ensure next steps are identified with timelines and assign responsibilities
9. Wrap up the meeting, ensure that everyone is clear on what their roles are and that the time and date of the next meeting is set.
10. Lastly thank everyone for their time and input, it is nice to acknowledge that people have made time in their busy schedules to come together.

Tips for involving everyone

- If it is a small group you can go around everyone and ask their view, this does not work in a large group!
- Ideally you want an atmosphere where there can be genuine debate and discussion but this takes time to develop as your group develops confidence in themselves and the chair.
- Stop people from talking too long, be firm but not aggressive, you can say "you have raised some interesting points, I am going to stop you there to give the others a chance to comment"
- Ask questions to draw people out "does anyone else want to comment on that"
- Stop people from interrupting, but make sure you come back to them after the person they interrupted has finished.
- Make sure people expressing minority or unpopular concepts get heard properly and are not intimidated to say how they feel

Tips for VC / TC meetings

- More and more meetings are held virtually and whilst this makes it easier for people to attend it does add an extra dimension to the role of chair as opposed to having a group of people physically in front of you.
- Acknowledge people who are on TC and remember that you miss the verbal clues (i.e. head shaking / nodding) so ensure you ask them if they have anything to add
- Only allow one person to talk at a time and minimise interruptions
- Pause at the end of each item to ensure others have a chance to speak before you move on to the next item on the agenda, keep clarifying that everyone has had their say by asking if anyone has anything to add.
- If multiple people have something to say acknowledge this by saying something like "we will hear from Mary first and then move onto Mike"

After the meeting

- Ensure the scribe gets the meeting notes to you in a timely fashion to review before distribution
- Ensure everyone is aware of what they are supposed to be doing before the next meeting.
- Reflect on how the meeting went, what did you do well, what was not so successful. Don't beat yourself up about these things but think about what you would do differently/will do differently next time.

Resources you may find helpful

<h1>YOU TUBE</h1>
<p>Good clip with practical tips on how to speak, sit and control your voice.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnZBwyFcWkk</p>
<p>Good overview of a meeting</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5IUyseptlc</p>
<p>Tips for dealing with difficult people</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLL89mBagHY</p>
<p>Developing your Mihi</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_lfk5lOrBk</p>

HealthLearn

There are some good resources available on healthLearn as well.

<https://www.healthlearn.ac.nz/course/view.php?id=622>

The screenshot shows the HealthLearn website interface. At the top left is the healthLearn logo. On the right, there are icons for email, notifications, and a user profile for LISA WILSON. Below the header is a navigation menu with items: Dashboard, My Profile, My Bookings, Learning Plans, Record of Learning, Team, Reports, Find Learning, Development Centre, and HELP. A breadcrumb trail reads: Dashboard / Courses / Development Centre / Learning Modules / Meeting fundamentals. On the left, there is an 'ADMINISTRATION' sidebar with a 'Site administration' link. The main content area features a pink banner with the text 'MEETING FUNDAMENTALS' and a row of four profile photos of people. Below the banner is a 'Back to Development Centre' button. The main heading is 'Meeting fundamentals', followed by a paragraph: 'The meeting fundamentals modules below introduce you to the 5P process of running meetings. In addition to these processes are information on managing behaviour and dynamics and improving participation. Work through each resource sequentially as a full course. Alternatively, explore any one of the topics, in any order, and you can revisit a topic as many times as you like, if you have a specific area that you want to focus on.' To the right of this text is a small image of a meeting room with a table and chairs.